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Expert Poultry Notes

We will be glad to hear from readers on any poultry topics, and all queries addressed to the paper will be answered, if possible, in the issue following their receipt. Our desire is to help those who have difficulty regarding the management of their poultry, or who think that the advice of an expert may be of value to them.

-EDITOR

Inflammation of the Crop

Many otherwise good table birds are largely spoiled by their breastbones being bent, which not only detracts from their appearance, but makes carving exceedingly difficult. There are two reasons for the keels becoming a bad shape, both of which can be overcome. The one is owing to hereditary influences, and the prevention of this is obvious, namely, to use parent stock possessing perfectly straight breastbones. One of the laws of breeding is that "like produces like," and thus should the parents have this fault it is invariably reproduced in the offspring. Equally so should the breastbones of the parents be straight, for if this is not the case the chickens will possess this fault, one that reduces their value, and prevents their obtaining anything like a first-class price. The other cause is due to the chickens perching when too young, and this is a more common cause than the former. In a young chicken the breastbone is merely gristle, not having yet formed into bone, and it stands to reason that should this gristle be pressed against a narrow perch all night it is bound to become misshapen. Chickens should not perch until they are about four months of age; in fact, a little later than this is desirable. The best plan is to allow them to sleep upon the floor of the poultry-house, taking care that a plentiful supply of litter is available for them.

Crooked Breastbones

This is a somewhat serious disease, and unless it is attended to as soon as the first symptoms show themselves it speedily terminates in death. The chief symptoms are difficulty in breathing, general restlessness, attempts to vomit. As a general rule, the complaint is due to the presence of some irritant poison. Mr. Woodroffe Hill, a well-known authority on the disease of poultry, recommends the following:—

Mucilaginous or albuminous fluid, such as barley water, milk, and isinglass, or a thin solution of gum should be freely administered after first evacuating the crop. Should phosphorus have been taken, magnesia may be given, followed by turpentine mixed in cream. Oil must not be administered. Lead is often a cause of poultry poisoning when paints are about. In this case the crops should be immediately evacuated, and half a teaspoonful of sulphate of magnesia and five minims of sulphuric acid mixed in a wineglassful of water, be administered without delay. In a couple of

hours five grains of iodide of potassium may be given in a teaspoonful of water. Afterwards feed on mucilaginous liquid. If purging commences, give a teaspoonful of castor-oil, with a grain of opium. Crude or unslaked lime is an irritant poison to fowls, producing inflammation of the throat, crop, gullet, gizzard and intestines. In this case oil should at once be administered, followed by full and frequent doses of mucilaginous or albuminous fluids.

Height of Perches

At all times of the year particular attention should be devoted to the form of perch employed, but especially is this the case during the autumn and spring. The old form of ladder perch, which is still to be found on a few farms, possesses several disadvantages, chief among which is the fact that the birds are close under the roof, and should a sudden frost set in, as it is always likely to do in the autumn or spring of the year, the cold strikes down through the roof directly on to the backs of the birds, seriously affecting the egg production. All the perches should be on the same level, and placed about 18 inches apart. There is no advantage in having high perches, while, as already shown, there are several disadvantages. A foot or 15 inches is quite high enough from the ground, affording ample protection from dampness and from rats. In a small house the perches can stretch from one side to the other, slats being fastened in the framework of the walls into which they fit. In a large house it is necessary to have a separate stand, and this involves a very little labor or expense. The best for the perch is a fire-pole about two inches in diameter; failing this, an ordinary piece of two-inch square quartering answers the purpose, provided the sharp edges are rounded off.

Testing Eggs

In order to ensure the freshness of eggs for edible purposes it is an excellent plan to test them before despatching to market. If the producer knows for certain that his eggs are newly laid he need not go to the trouble of testing, but many large dairies and hotels are in the habit of testing every egg that they receive. The simplest method, and the one in most common use, is that known as "candling." The egg is held before a strong light in a dark room, and the size of the air-space is noted. In a perfectly new-laid egg it is very small indeed, but as age increases evaporation takes place through the innumerable holes perforating the shell, until when it is a month old it occupies about one-eighth of the whole. There should be no spots or dark places in the yolk, while the chalazae should on no account be ruptured.

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